

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 1-28. (Cancelled)

29. (Currently amended) A method of removing a portion of a concrete surface, the method comprising:

providing a beam of laser light;

irradiating a location of the surface with the laser light;

wherein a shadow mask ~~means~~ is used to remove a low power density part of the laser beam that is below a threshold power density for surface removal before the surface location is irradiated.

30. (Cancelled)

31. (Currently amended) A method of removing a portion of a concrete surface according to claim 29, [[30]] wherein the shadow mask absorbs ~~adsorbs~~ substantially all of that portion of the laser beam that is below the threshold power density.

32. (Currently amended) A method of removing a portion of a concrete surface according to claim 29, wherein the shadow mask ~~means~~ is a reflective mask wherein light incident on the mask is reflected by the mask.

33. (Currently amended) A method of removing a portion of a concrete surface according to claim 32, wherein the reflection redirects lower power density laser light to another low power density portion of the laser beam to create an additional high power density portion of the laser beam.

34. (Cancelled)

35. (Currently amended) A method of removing a portion of a concrete surface according to claim 29, wherein the surface portion is removed by the effect of thermal shock.

36-45. (Cancelled)

46. (New) A method of removing a portion of a natural stone surface, the method comprising:

providing a beam of laser light;

irradiating a location of the surface with the laser light;

wherein a shadow mask is used to remove a low power density part of the laser beam that is below a threshold power density for surface removal before the surface location is irradiated.

47. (New) A method of removing a portion of a natural stone surface according to claim 46, wherein the shadow mask absorbs substantially all of that portion of the laser beam that is below the threshold power density.

48. (New) A method of removing a portion of a natural stone surface according to claim 46, wherein the shadow mask is a reflective mask wherein light incident on the mask is reflected by the mask.

49. (New) A method of removing a portion of a natural stone surface according to claim 48, wherein the reflection redirects lower power density laser light to another low power density portion of the laser beam to create an additional high power density portion of the laser beam.

50. (New) A method of removing a portion of a natural stone surface according to claim 46, wherein the surface portion is removed by the effect of thermal shock.